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and a disciple of Jesus, it was reasonable to accept this as final.<sup>1</sup> But for those who take a very different view of the Fourth Gospel it is not unreasonable to ask why they ought not to share the doubts of Clement and the Epistola. The answer is that we are influenced, and probably ought to be influenced, by a combination of the fact that the Gospel of Mark when it breaks off seems to be leading up to an appearance of Jesus to Peter, and that Paul says that the first appearance of Jesus was to Cephas; ergo, Peter is Cephas. This is no doubt a reasonable proposition, but it is just as well to understand that it does not rest on the strongest possible authority, for Paul nowhere says that Peter is Cephas, though commentators have the bad habit<sup>2</sup> (to which I plead guilty myself) of constantly talking of Peter when he says Cephas, and Mark never speaks of Cephas at all.

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#### FOURTEEN GENERATIONS: 490 YEARS

##### AN EXPLANATION OF THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS

“So the whole number of generations from Abraham to David is fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah fourteen generations.” Matt. 1, 17.

The difficulties presented by the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke, whether examined separately or compared with each other, were early remarked, and the discussion of them is a voluminous chapter in Christian literature.<sup>3</sup> The question why the generations are divided into three periods was raised by Chrysostom in a sermon on Matt. 1, 17 (*In Matt. Hom. iv*). The Jews, he says, had in these periods successively three different forms of government, aristocracy,

<sup>1</sup> It is an interesting speculation to ask why Clement did not hold this view. The answer is partly that he wished to save Peter's reputation at the expense of Cephas, who was only one of the Seventy, partly perhaps that he knew Greek a little better than most men and felt better the implication of Paul's words. But I wish we knew more about the text of the Fourth Gospel used by Clement.

<sup>2</sup> A consideration of the textual phenomena in the Epistle to the Galatians shows that this bad habit is not confined to modern commentators.

<sup>3</sup> Friederich Spanheim (1600–1649), in his *Dubia Evangelica* (1639), deals with no less than twenty-six such problems in Matt. 1, 1–17, at a length of 215 solid and solidly learned pages.

monarchy, and oligarchy, and were as bad under the last as under the first; the captivity itself had failed to work amendment. It was every-way necessary that Christ should come.<sup>2</sup> Spanheim ingeniously recalls the parable in Luke 20, 9-18: after the failure of three missions, God at last sent his son.

Much more to the point than this insinuation of the incorrigibility of the Jews is an explanation which Spanheim adopts from Jansen:<sup>3</sup> It was to indicate that at the time of Jesus' birth, fourteen generations after the beginning of the exile, a great change, a new order of things, was imminent, such as had happened at the end of each preceding period of fourteen generations — the establishment of the kingdom fourteen generations after Abraham; its fall fourteen generations after David. This next great change, according to common Jewish expectations, was the coming of the Messiah; and precisely at this critical moment in history was born, as the title of our genealogy emphasizes, "Jesus Christ (the Messiah), the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1, 1). To this verse 17 returns: "From the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations."

That this was the intention of the author seems clear. But why each of the three periods should be measured by *fourteen* generations is not thus explained. It is true that the fourteen generations from Abraham to David correspond to the genealogies in the Old Testament, and are enumerated in precisely the same way in Jewish lists which count fifteen to Solomon;<sup>4</sup> while for the third period, from the point where the genealogy of Jesus branches off from the lists in Chronicles in the third generation after the exile (Abiud the son of

<sup>2</sup> Similarly Theophylact *in loc.*, quoted by Spanheim, *Dubium xv.* (Cur Matthaeus cap. 1. 17 partiatur Genealogiam Christi in certas tesseradecades, et quidem in tres: et cur eas per ἀνακεφαλαύσων peculiarem collectas Lectori proponat?)

<sup>3</sup> Corn. Jansen, *Comm. in suam Concordiam*, etc., c. 6 (Louvain 1576, p. 49): "Ideo autem in tres quaterdenas Christi genealogiam Matthaeus dividit, ut ostendat sicut ab Abraham usque ad transmigrationem Babylonis bis mutatus est status Judaeorum, binis quaterdenis completis: ita et tertiam illam mutationem status Judaeorum, quae ab eis post transmigrationem expectabatur futura per Messiam convenienter factam post tertiam ab Abraham tesseradecadem, ipsumque Messiam tunc nasci debuisse, ac sic Jesum Mariae filium, qui finis est tertiae tesseradecidis, esse expectatum Messiam magis credibile faciat. Deinde ut ostenderet, sicut fuerunt quatuordecim generationes ab Abraham usque ad David, in quo coepit stabile et liberum Judaeorum regnum, et deinde rursum quatuordecim generationes a Davide usque ad delinquum regni, hoc est, exilium Babylonicum: ita ab hoc rursum tantae usque ad novam regni Davidis restauracionem fuisse quatuordecim generationes. Ex quibus constat quare et Davidem regem vocat, et mentionem faciat transmigrationis Babylonicae."

<sup>4</sup> Pesikta (ed. Buber) f. 53a.

Zerubbabel), there is nothing to compare it with. But the fourteen generations of the kingdom are strikingly at variance with the record of succession in the Book of Kings — “Why did he skip three kings?” asks Chrysostom, and commentators and apologists have exercised themselves on the question ever since.

The omission of the three kings is by no means the only discrepancy between the genealogy in Matthew and its sources; but it has always been recognized as the gravest, for the kings thus passed over are not obscure or ephemeral rulers. Joash, Amaziah, and Azariah (Uzziah) are, on the contrary, very prominent figures in the history of Judah, the record of whose eventful reigns may be read at large in 2 Kings 11-15,<sup>5</sup> and who, according to the chronology of the book, occupied the throne for 121 years (40 + 29 + 52). At the end of his list, again, he makes Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) the son of Josiah instead of his grandson, omitting Jehoiakim.<sup>6</sup> By itself this might perhaps be ascribed to a confusion of the two names such as occurs in Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament and elsewhere; but taken in connection with the previous omission of the three kings, it is more probably to be attributed to the same intention, namely to make the period of the monarchy fall within exactly fourteen generations, like that which preceded it.<sup>6a</sup>

Mere love of symmetry can hardly have been the sole motive for so violent a curtailment of the history; it is more likely that the number fourteen had an intrinsic significance for the author and a decisive importance for his purpose in compiling the genealogy. This purpose was not simply to trace the lineage of Jesus back to David in the royal line, showing that as a descendant of David he possessed one of the necessary qualifications of the Messiah according to prophecy and universal expectation — a qualification which he shared with many others who claimed descent from David. For this purpose it was superfluous to continue the line back to Abraham — that David was descended from Abraham required no genealogical demonstration — and the symmetrical periodization of the history would be meaningless. The symmetry of the genealogy was meant to prove, as Jansen saw, that the time for the advent of the Messiah

<sup>5</sup> See also 2 Chron. 22, 10-26, 28.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Kings 23, 34-24, 6; Jer. 36.

<sup>6a</sup> A genealogy of the Messiah is given in Tanchuma, Toledoth c. 20, ed. Buber, f. 70 a-b. The royal line is followed from David through Zerubbabel. From that point on the genealogy in Chronicles is transcribed, leading to Anani (the cloud man, 1 Chron. 3, 24), who is the Messiah according to Dan. 7, 13.

had come, and that Jesus, who was born just at this point, was the Messiah.

It was the general belief of the Jews that in his plan for the history of his people and of the world God had determined not only the events in their succession, but the times at which they should come to pass; and especially that the great epochs in history, such as the end of their long subjection to the heathen powers and the coming of the promised golden age, were unalterably fixed. They believed also that God had revealed through the prophets certain signs which foreboded the approaching crisis; they made catalogues, so to speak, of these signs, and scanned the horizon of the times for their appearance. From the second century before our era, at least, they combined with such prognostications an attempt to ascertain the date more exactly by numerical calculations based on scripture, as in Daniel and Enoch, and thereafter in apocalypses almost universally.

Daniel, taking the seventy years of Jeremiah (25, 12 ff.; 29, 10 ff.) as seventy weeks of years ( $70 \times 7$ ), operates with a cycle of four hundred and ninety years, dividing the history into three unequal periods ( $7 + 62 + 1$ ),<sup>7</sup> upon the last of which the golden age was to follow. Enoch has the same cycle in the vision of the seventy shepherds (89,50–90,25), symmetrically divided (12 + 23, 23 + 12); here also the golden age, with the Messiah, immediately follows (90, 28–38).<sup>8</sup> Both Daniel and Enoch take the beginning of the exile as the *terminus a quo* for their reckoning, and count from that point four hundred and ninety years to the end of the period in which they were living, an end which they believed to be imminent.

The motive of these calculations in the first instance was to prove that the end of the evil time in which the apocalypses were written was close at hand — the widespread apostasy, the cessation of sacrifice and desecration of the temple, the persecution for religion's sake. In less troubled days men turned to them for an answer to the question when the golden age — however they imagined it — was to begin. Christians had another interest in them; namely to prove that their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, came precisely at the time fixed in prophecy for the beginning of a new era. The attempt to

<sup>7</sup> Dan. 9, 24 ff.

<sup>8</sup> In the so-called apocalypse of the ten weeks (Enoch 93; 91, 12–17), which divides the history of the world, past and future, from the creation to the last Judgment, into ten "weeks," the weeks are probably periods of 490 years. A golden age (the eighth week) follows the apostasy of the seventh (coming down to the Hellenistic age). The close of the tenth brings the great judgment. The three last (8–10) lie in the author's future.

demonstrate this from the seventy weeks of Daniel occupies a large space in the history of Christian apologetic.<sup>9</sup>

In the light of what has been observed above and of this apologetic motive, it is probable that the "fourteen generations" from the deportation to the birth of Christ are meant to cover exactly the four hundred and ninety years which according to Daniel and Enoch were to elapse between the beginning of the exile and the inauguration of the new era; and, assuming that the author took the length of a generation at thirty-five years, his fourteen generations give exactly the necessary number ( $35 \times 14 = 490$ ).

The use of generations as the basis of a schematized chronology is common. Hecataeus of Miletus and other Greek logographers derived their chronology in this way from genealogies, reckoning forty years to a generation. Herodotus calculates how long it was from the first king of Egypt to Sethos (ca. 700 B.C.) from the statement of the priests that between the two there were three hundred and forty-one generations of high priests, and exactly as many of kings. He counts three generations to a century, and thus obtains 11,340 years for the duration of the period. The systematic chronology of the Old Testament historical books employs periods of four hundred and eighty years, or twelve generations of forty years each. Apart from this chronological scheme, which appears to have been imposed on the history in the sixth century, there is no evidence in the Old Testament that a generation was reckoned at forty years; and to infer from it that the Jews at the beginning of the Christian era counted thus is as unwarranted as it would be to make a similar generalization for the Greeks from the chronology of Hecataeus.

Herodotus counts, as we do, three generations to the century;<sup>10</sup> but the century had no such significance for the Jews at any time as it had for the Greeks and their successors, and it is for this reason unlikely that the Jews fixed the length of a generation at a third of a century. It would be much more natural for them to divide the

<sup>9</sup> The older interpretations in this sense — Hippolytus, Julius Africanus, Clement, Origen, Tertullian, Eusebius — are quoted at length by Jerome in his commentary on Dan. 9. To these may be added Jerome himself, Chrysostom (Adv. Judaeos ii), and Aphraates (Demonstratio 23). A "futurist" interpretation seems to have been first proposed by Apollinaris of Laodicea (quoted by Jerome, *u. s.*).

<sup>10</sup> Another estimate, thirty years, based on physiological considerations is ascribed by Plutarch to Heraclitus, and later became common. The same reasons for it are set forth by Porphyry, *Quaest. Homer.* 14 (on Iliad i, 250), quoted by Wettstein on Matt. 1, 17.

seventy years of normal human life by two, giving a generation of thirty-five years, which is close enough to the average as far as common observation goes, and keeps the generation in its proper genealogical relation. An example in which a generation is reckoned at thirty-five years is Job 42, 16, where it is said that after his rehabilitation "Job lived a hundred and forty years, and saw his sons and his son's sons, four generations."<sup>11</sup> If Matthew meant his fourteen generations to fill four hundred and ninety years, he was reckoning in the same way. It is, therefore, not an objection to our hypothesis that it requires us to assume a generation of thirty-five years.

The fourteen generations in each of the two preceding periods, from Abraham to David and from David to the deportation, must be meant to give the same measure of time, four hundred and ninety years. The duration of the latter period agrees tolerably well with the chronology of the historical books, which gives four hundred and eighty years from the building of Solomon's temple to the return from the exile; from the accession of David to the beginning of the exile would be about the same.

To express this in terms of generations, however, the author is compelled to do such violence to the history as has been noted above. From Abraham to David he had the fourteen generations given him; but here he was compelled to ignore the biblical chronology, which allows four hundred and eighty years from the exodus to the building of Solomon's temple alone (1 Kings 6, 1), to say nothing of the time between Abraham and the exodus.<sup>12</sup>

The really important thing for the author are the four hundred and ninety years that end with the birth of Christ. By our chronology, based on the canon of Ptolemy, there is a discrepancy here of a whole century, for Jehoiachin was deported to Babylon in 597 B.C. Such a comparison is unreasonable; the Jews, who, until the Seleucid era came into use, had no fixed era, and no canon of Ptolemy, were widely at sea in the chronology of these centuries. There was no native succession of rulers before the Asmonaeans; the records of the priests were doubtless destroyed when Antiochus Epiphanes sacked the temple and converted it into a temple of Zeus. Their own historical books, with the exception of the brief episode of Ezra and

<sup>11</sup> A mediaeval Jewish interpreter, Isaac ibn Jasos, inferred that wherever a generation is spoken of in the Bible, it is to be taken as thirty-five years, for which hasty generalization he is castigated by Ibn Ezra.

<sup>12</sup> Exod. 12, 40 gives (in the present Hebrew text) 430 years to the sojourn in Egypt; Gen. 15, 33 a round 400. Cf. Gal. 3, 17; Acts 7, 6.

Nehemiah, were a blank from the restoration of the temple<sup>13</sup> to the time of Alexander, and there end. The “seventy weeks” of Daniel, to the predicted fall of Antiochus Epiphanes, whatever *terminus a quo* be taken for Dan. 9, 25, are from fifty to seventy years too long; for the Christian interpretation, which finds its *ad quem* at the birth or at the death of Christ,<sup>14</sup> they are not long enough by a hundred years or more. The Talmudic chronology in *Seder Olam Rabbah* 28, which makes the seventy weeks stretch from the first destruction of the temple to the second<sup>15</sup> (seventy years the temple lay in ruins, it stood after it was rebuilt four hundred and twenty years), is in the same case: its four hundred and ninety years are by our chronology a hundred and sixty-six years too short.<sup>16</sup> Even if the Jews had had more accurate knowledge of dates in the Persian and Greek periods than they possessed, chronology could never be allowed to contradict the sure word of prophecy.

The fact that four hundred and ninety years bring us, according to *our* reckoning, only to 96 B.C. does not therefore militate against the intention of the genealogy to bring them down to the birth of Christ; and it can at least be said that in measuring them as a whole by fourteen generations the author did not involve himself in a whole series of intermediate conflicts with ascertained dates such as appear in the more detailed chronology of the *Seder Olam*.

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### THE MEANING OF JOHN XVI, 8-11

Καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐκεῖνος ἐλέγει τὸν κόσμον περὶ ἀμαρτίας καὶ περὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ περὶ κρίσεως· περὶ ἀμαρτίας μὲν, ὅτι οὐ πιστεύουσιν εἰς ἐμέ· περὶ δικαιοσύνης δὲ, ὅτι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ὑπάγω καὶ οὐκέτι θεωρεῖτε με· περὶ δὲ κρίσεως, ὅτι ὁ ἀρχῶν τοῦ κόσμου τούτου κέκριται.

In all the English versions except the Rheims New Testament of 1582 δικαιοσύνη in this passage is translated ‘righteousness.’ The

<sup>13</sup> In our chronology 516 B.C.

<sup>14</sup> Or the destruction of Jerusalem, or even the war under Hadrian.

<sup>15</sup> In our dates, 586 B.C. to 70 A.D.

<sup>16</sup> In a later chapter (30) the *Seder Olam* specifies: for the duration of Persian rule after the restoration of the temple 34 years; for the dominion of the Greeks, 180; Asmonaeans 103; Herod and his successors 103, or 420 years in all; which with the 70 of the exile make 490.